

Greetings Members of the Human Services Commission, my name is Cathryn Vincent. I am a lifelong resident of Illinois. I am a retired Social Work Administrator at the Illinois School for the Deaf, having been employed there for 35 years. I hold a BA degree from Gallaudet University and an MSW degree from the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle. I have been totally deaf since the age of 14 months due to spinal meningitis. At present I am a member of the Illinois Association of the Deaf and was their president of this statewide organization. I am an active member of the Jacksonville Community Center for the Deaf providing support in a number of capacities to the Board of JCCD.

I appeal to you in this role at JCCD to vehemently protest the cuts to JCCD's budget, specifically the Drug and Alcohol Substance Abuse (DASA) budget. In 2010 FY, the cut was 4%, in 2011 FY the cut was 3% whereas for FY 2012, the cut is 20%! Approximately 350 deaf consumers with drug and or alcohol abuse problems receive sign language interpreting services for drug/alcohol counseling. With a 20% additional cut to the DASA budget, less consumers will receive direly needed services.

We appeal to you to advise the Governor to restore some of those cuts. It is a true challenge to comprehend how the esteemed Governor can justify these cuts when he so willingly justified free college education to children of illegal aliens in this state. Frankly, I assure you that this has the deaf community as well as a major portion of the general community enraged.. What was he thinking in light of the dire state of Illinois finances?

You know, deafness is NOT the simple fact of being unable to hear. It is a communication disorder. People often mistakenly think lipreading is a cure all to enhance communication. Research verifies that less than 1% of the deaf population are 'expert lipreaders' and of that percentage, they only hit an accuracy rate of 35-40% with the rest being educated guessing. Lipreading has nothing to do with intelligence as even the most intelligent deaf person might have difficulty lipreading. It is not a skill that can be taught. You can teach the principles of lipreading but it is like having a knack for learning foreign languages, you either have it or you don't as far as the skill is concerned. The majority of deaf people rely on American Sign Language and thereby require the services of a certified sign language interpreter. Nearly all drug and alcohol counselors are normal hearing persons who are not versed in sign language. Therefore the services of a sign language interpreter is needed to bridge the communication gap. Budget cuts means less services for deaf consumers who direly need drug/alcohol counseling. They don't need to be punished on the basis of their deafness. Please tell Mr. Quinn to do the right thing and restore services to this segment of the deaf community.

Thank you for your listening past and I wish you well in the job you are mandated to do. I pray the Governor does not turn a deaf ear to this plea.